

Electricity access and the changing social position of women

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- What are the social transitions that accompany energy transitions, and how significant are the changing social positions of women due to energy provision?
- What could be the enabling environment that is a prerequisite for social transition? What are the linkages? Where is the evidence?
- Do gender responsive energy sector policies and programmes lead to larger goals of social transition and gender equity? Are the approaches and results moving beyond the namesake, and if so, how?



- Easier to measure changes in
 - Income levels/economic positions
 - Educational levels
 - Health status
- Relatively difficult to measure change in social positions of women within household and beyond due to availability or access to energy
 - Dynamic and non-linear

Some evidences

- Mahavitaran – Maharashtra state electricity distribution company
 - Appointed women line staff known as *Mahila Vidyut Sahayak* (women electricity support staff)
 - Women are trained to work hands-on with electricity poles, theft detection, live cables, transformers etc.
 - Technically known as a mans job
 - More than 2000 women recruited since 2013
 - This has given women - employment opportunities and cash in hand
 - But has this led to changes in social positions?

- First batch - women from fisher community
 - Both men and women could not understand why women should do the pole climbing job (masculine job) wearing a mans cloth while selling fish is so much easier
 - Women - Intimidated by the job
 - Worried about travelling to distant places
 - Safety and security
 - Fear of climbing poles
 - Convincing family members has not been easy
 - Biggest fear – being teased by men and the thought of marriage proposals being affected
 - Men in the company
 - Did not appreciate women doing a job that only they have done all these years
 - Women should rather be allotted desk job rather than field jobs



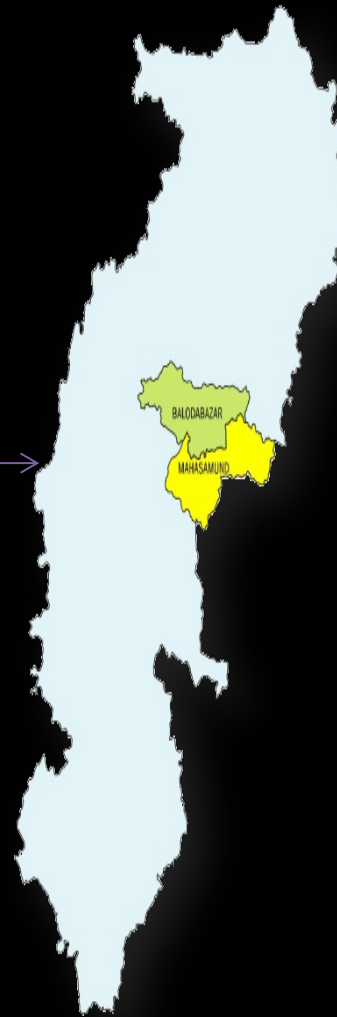
- Tool kit is given to women and they wanted “*fair and lovely*” as part of the tool kit

- Madhya Pradesh West Power Distribution Company
 - Created “pink electricity zone” (all women staff)
 - Assistant engineer, junior engineer, line supervisor, line person, meter readers etc.

Always referred to as “Women are no less than Men”

Chhattisgarh

Under Remote Village Electrification Programme of the Government of India, solar PV mini grids are undertaken in remote forested areas to provide electricity



Social and cultural barriers

- Women not keen to take up jobs like electrician, ‘line man’ , meter readers etc. since it involved travelling to many villages
 - Culturally and socially not acceptable
- Even within the electricity board though the law provided for equal employment opportunities, women were engaged in administrative division
 - women qualified as engineers and technicians preferred desk jobs and looked for postings in urban or peri-urban areas
 - Difficulty in managing household responsibilities and balancing family life, difficulty in commuting to sites constrained women

JEEViKA – TERI initiative

JEEViKA – Promoting Self Help Groups (SHGs) and building capacity to enable women to access credit and services

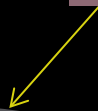
- Initiated by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS)



JEEViKA – TERI (LaBL) Collaboration

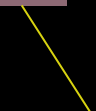
Solar Home Systems (20 Wp)

- 2 luminaries (2 W)
- 1 mobile port
- 1 Improved cook stove
- Battery, panel, charge controller
- Total cost - Rs 4500 (upfront cost Rs 500)



Inclusion of women as target beneficiaries

- Receive a clean energy loan – **Energy Security Credit**



Women - **Custodians** of the energy system

Gendered uses and outcomes



Role and participation of women in supply

Bihar - JEEViKA – TERI approach

- Provided opportunities for women to be trained as technicians, skill development, vocational training

Culturally and socially not acceptable due to masculine label attached to electricity/technology related jobs

Electricity at home enabled the children to study. Yet, **girls pursuing higher education was not encouraged** and the priority for parents was to get the girls married to the groom of their choice

Major decision making within the household and community still taken by men. **Women decision making power restricted to patriarchal systems** – cooking and managing the households

Role of women in public domain minimum – **Poor participation in panchayat meetings**

Use of mobiles mainly for **entertainment and connecting with family and friends**

Women address their husbands as ***“Mallik”***

Arrival of male child is **celebrated with pomp and show**

The **“protective”** behaviour of parents suggests **gender norms** that undervalue girls' capacity to think and manage their lives

Not one straight
jacket where such
initiatives will straight
away lead to changes
in social positions

Drops of
water make
the mighty
ocean

Takes more than
policies to bring these
changes in social
positions

**Transformation
in gender
relations takes
time and hinge
on more inputs**



Thank You !!

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Exploring Factors that Enhance & restrict Women's Empowerment through 'Electrification' – EFEWEE

- How may electricity make a difference ?
 - Not only interested in measuring impacts of electricity but how and why this happens
 - Focus on conditions to explain why electricity produces a given set of gendered effects
- Comparing centralised grid & decentralised electricity systems
- 2015-18;
- India, Kenya & Nepal



4 conditional factors

4 Policy, regulations, financing schemes & role of international actors



1 Socio-cultural & material context

2 Design of electricity system

3 Process of implementation, management, staffing & ownership

Gendered Uses and Outcomes



Placement of lights

- Every household had light in the kitchen
- Kitchen was part of the living room which had light

Better illumination and visibility

Improved cooking routines

- Light in the kitchen
- Cleaner house

Increased safety, security and mobility

Convenience

- Opportunity to hold marriages and festivals for longer hours in the evening

Productive opportunities

- Convenient to manage business (petty shops /grocery shops) due to better illumination

Increased leisure time

- Extra hours in the evening- used for socialising



Gendered uses and outcomes



Gendered outcomes

Mobile phones

- Increased connectivity – friends and relatives
- Convenience of mobile charging at home
- Earlier men used to get it charged from the village market - Women were not comfortable travelling to the nearby market and had to rely on men and boys

Health

- Reduced incidences of eye and respiratory diseases due to reduced exposure to kerosene soot

Education

- Children get more time to study after dark
- Better lighting to study after dark